

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE WAR FOR AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, 1763-1775

1763-1764: As a result of the French and Indian War, Great Britain begins to adopt a new policy of imperialism designed to administer North America and recoup part of the war's cost from the colonies

Proclamation of 1763

- Prohibited colonials to move west of the Appalachians
- Purpose: to avoid inciting disputes with Indians, thus preventing future
- uprisings/wars
- Colonials infuriated
 - Many veterans had fought in the war and felt betrayed: "We fought the war for the right to move west"
 - Land speculators believed Americans should have access to lands.

Sugar Acts passed in 1764

- First act ever passed specifically that raised revenue for the crown.
- Aimed to regulate the illegal triangular trade by collecting duties that the colonists had not paid for many years.
- Reduced taxes on molasses but taxed all molasses, not just molasses from French West Indies.

Quartering Act, 1765: Certain colonies required to provide food & quarters for British troops.

1765-1774: Three great crises in the colonies lead to the American Revolution: Stamp Act, Townshend Acts, & Tea Act

The Stamp Act of 1765

- Purpose: to raise revenues to support the new military force in the colonies
- Provisions:
 - Official stamps on paper would serve as proof of payment.
 - Tax applied to published materials and legal documents e.g., pamphlets, newspapers, diplomas, bills of lading, marriage certificates, death certificates, mortgages, insurance policies, liquor licenses, & playing cards.
- English Prime Minister Grenville's view
 - Stamp Act was reasonable and just
 - Only required colonials to pay their fair share for colonial defense
 - Stamp Act in Britain had been much heavier and in effect for 2 generations.
- Colonists' views

- distinguished between “legislation” and “taxation”
 - “No taxation w/o representation”
- Legislation, “external taxes,” the right of Parliament regarding the empire; e.g. customs duties (tariffs)
- Taxation, “internal taxes,” exclusive right of local representative gov’t.
 - British taxation was robbery; attacking sacred rights of property
- Grenville’s response: colonies had “virtual representation” in Parliament
 - All British subjects were represented, even those who did not vote for members in Parliament.
- Stamp Act repealed in 1766 after widespread colonial agitation
- But at the same time, Parliament passed the Declaratory Act
 - Claimed that Parliament had the right to tax colonies in the future.
 - Purpose was partly to save face

Townshend Acts (1767)

- Charles Townshend took control of Parliament and sought to punish the colonies for the Stamp Act uprising.
- Provisions:
 - Small import duty placed on glass, white lead, paper, paint, silk and tea.
 - Tax was an indirect customs duty (“external tax”)
- Colonial reaction
 - Colonies angrily interpreted the act as an inappropriate tax to raise revenue
 - John Dickinson, Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania
 - Challenged distinction between “internal” and “external” taxes.
 - Denied right to levy taxes for purpose of revenue.
 - Prompted the Massachusetts Circular Letter
- Boston “Massacre”
 - Peaceful) Arrival of troops in Boston aroused American resistance
 - Colonials fearful of standing armies; believed Britain sought to suppress colonial liberties.
 - March 5, 1770 British soldiers (having been provoked) fired on a crowd
 - Eleven civilians killed or wounded
 - Word of the “massacre” spread throughout the colonies (esp. by Sons of Liberty)
 - Colonial propaganda grossly exaggerated the event.
 - John Adams and the trial of the soldiers
- Committees of Correspondence

- Samuel Adams used propaganda to whip up colonial resentment
- Adams organized local committees of correspondence in Mass., Nov. 1772.
- Chief function was to spread propaganda and info. by interchanging letters in order to keep opposition to British policy alive.
- Intercolonial committees of correspondence emerged, evolving directly into the first American congresses.

The Tea Act Crisis and the First Continental Congress

- Tea Act (1773)
 - British gov't granted British East India Company a monopoly of the American tea trade.
 - Price of tea would be even lower than existing prices, even with the tax.
 - Americans reacted angrily: saw Tea Act as an attempt to trick colonies into accepting the tax through cheaper tea.
- Boston Tea Party, Dec. 16, 1773
 - Sons of Liberty, dressed as Indians, boarded three ships, smashed hundreds of chests open, and dumped the tea into the harbor.
- "Intolerable Acts" (Coercive Acts)
 - 1774, Parliament passed laws designed to punish Boston for the Tea Party
 - Boston Port Act — harbor remained closed until damages were paid and law and order restored.
 - Massachusetts charter revoked
 - King had power to appoint the Governor's Council, not the assembly
 - Forbade town meetings except for election of town officials.
 - Enforcing officials who killed colonists could now be tried in England instead of the colonies (thereby avoiding colonial justice).
 - Quartering Act: Provided for the quartering of troops once again in Boston.
- The First Continental Congress
 - In response to "Intolerable Acts," the committees of correspondence urged the colonies to act quickly.
 - Bostonians agreed to end all trade with Great Britain and invited other colonies to join the resistance.
 - First Continental Congress met in autumn 1774
 - 12 of 13 colonies present (except Georgia)
 - Delegates included Samuel Adams, John Adams, George Washington, & Patrick Henry.

- 1st Step: endorse several resolutions known as the Suffolk Resolves.
 - Denounced “Intolerable” Acts
 - Urged colonies to organize militia for defensive purposes
 - Called on colonies to suspend all trade with rest of British empire
 - Urged citizens not to pay taxes.
- Main purpose: Petition for redress of grievances (Declaration and Resolves)
- Yet, Congress restated allegiance to the King
 - No real desire to independent; merely wanted grievances redressed.
- Lexington and Concord — “The Shot Heard around the World”
 - Parliament ordered General Gage, new Gov. of Massachusetts, to arrest leaders of the rebellion and prepare for military action.
 - Gage sought to prevent bloodshed by disarming the local militia.
 - April 1775, 700 British redcoats sent secretly to nearby Lexington & Concord to seize gunpowder and arrest Sam Adams & John Hancock.
 - Paul Revere’s ride
 - Battle of Lexington and Concord began when Minutemen refused to disperse on the Lexington Green and shots were fired.
 - 8 Americans killed, 10 wounded.
 - Redcoats continued on to Concord. 6 miles away.